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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN ARMS SALES, U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN
RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage September 13-15 on Typhoon Sinlaku's pounding of Taiwan over the weekend and the import of tainted Chinese milk powder to Taiwan. In terms of editorials and commentaries, the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" published an argument proposed by retired Taiwan air force Commander Lee Kuei-fa for the second time to oppose Taiwan government's procurement of F-16 fighter jets, submarines, missiles, and Apache helicopters from the United States. An op-ed in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" listed several tests to the direction of Beijing's post-Olympics development in terms of domestic human rights, nationalism and cross-strait relations. The op-ed said that the opening of the UN General Assembly on September 16, in which China's attitude toward Taiwan's UN bid, will be the first test. An editorial in the pro-independence, "Taiwan News" commented on the implications of DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen's visit to the United States recently. End summary.

¶2. U.S.-Taiwan Arms Sales

"The Myth of Arms Sales; When Will the Brainwashing Evil Tune Stop"

C.V. Chen, President of the Red Cross Society of the Republic of China and the former Secretary-General of Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation, wrote in a column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (9/15):

"... [We often hear] either those scholars who uphold the arms procurement [from the United States] as paramount, or the government, which is too cowardly to change or to challenge the thinking on arms procurement, but interestingly, we seldom heard them explain to the people item by item from the perspective of national defense and strategy why we need to purchase the F-16 fighter jets, submarines, and Apache helicopters on the procurement list. We only see a constant, brainwashing evil tune, which says that the arms procurement is good and therefore not to procure arms is evil.

"Over a month ago, former Taiwan's Air Force Operations Commander Lee Kuei-fa proposed a report on the setup and reform of [Taiwan's] national defense to Minister of National Defense Chen Chao-min. Based on the air force's strategy and profession, [Lee] recommended ceasing the procurement of the F-16 fighter jets.

"Former Commander Lee pointed out the current absurdity of arms procurement from the perspective of his profession. He [Lee] pointed out that huge expenses for the maintenance of an air force with four hundred fighter jets will push out other necessary procurements of weapons systems in other services. He [Lee] pointed out that in order to avoid the massive destruction in the beginning of a war, the main fighter jets will be put in underground caves. However, 'the security of caves is not equivalent to the security of bases.' The take-off and landing of fighter jets requires runways that are of sufficient length. Once a war breaks out, the Chinese Communists must attack bases to make them unusable. Fighters that

cannot take off are equivalent to scrap iron.

"He [Lee] also thought that there is no need to procure so many submarines and missiles. Submarines do not fit in with the combat needs in the Taiwan Strait. As long as the People's Liberation Army Navy adjusts the direction of its sea attack and proceeds to Taiwan along the continental shelf, [Taiwan's] submarines will be useless. In terms of missiles, the Chinese Communists possess almost 1,500 M missiles [short range ballistic missiles]. Assuming we purchase the 600 new type of Patriot missiles, and all of them intercept the incoming M missiles, the Chinese Communists still possess almost one thousand missiles to attack us with. The price per Patriot missile that the United States military sold us is triple that of the Chinese Communist's M missile. It is almost an incentive in disguised form for the Chinese Communists to develop missiles and deplete our finances.

"Nevertheless, former Commander Lee's 10,000-word letter [i.e., serious reminder] was a waste of words and in vain. ...

"The unit price of one Apache helicopter is 14.5 million dollars. However, when Greece purchased twelve [Apache helicopters] in September 2003, the total price was 675 million dollars with weapons and logistics. The unit price [of one Apache helicopter] therefore increased to 56.25 million dollars. In other words, one Apache helicopter cost [the Taiwan] people 1.6 billion New Taiwan dollars.

"The main capability of an Apache helicopter that costs 1.6 billion New Taiwan dollars is 'anti-tank.' However, [the Apache helicopter's] self-defense capability is always called into question. [The Apache helicopter] is prone to attacks on the ground and to damage. In other words, in the strategic scenario of the

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Taiwan Strait, Apache helicopters' participation in the war is predicated on the Chinese Communists's tanks landing in Taiwan. After that, the Apache helicopters would be dispatched.

"However, isn't this contradiction not obvious enough? Once the Chinese Communists's military has landed in Taiwan, doesn't it mean that Taiwan has lost superiority in the sea and air? How can [we] expect the Apache helicopters to 'do their utmost to save a desperate situation' and change the combat situation? Can the [Taiwan] government guarantee that the Apache helicopter will not become 'a prohibitive bun' with per price at 1.6 billion New Taiwan dollars and the result of dispatching [a helicopter] in the war will not be like using a meat bun to hit a dog without return?"

13. U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

A) "What Did Beijing Gain from Games"

Richard Halloran, a writer based in Hawaii, opined in the pro-independence, "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (9/15):

"... A critical question is how Beijing's renewed confidence might affect the politburo's running struggle to subdue and eventually to take control of Taiwan.

"Relations between Taipei and Beijing have warmed up in recent months under President Ma Ying-jeou, but an early test will come up when the UN General Assembly convenes tomorrow. Taiwan has asked that it be permitted to 'participate' in UN activities and those of its affiliated organizations such as the WHO.

"Before, Taiwan asked to join the UN or to become an observer. Each time, China adamantly opposed that arrangement, contending that Taiwan was part of China and that Beijing spoke for Taiwan. This time, US officials said, Washington favors the approach by Taiwan since it skirts the issue of sovereignty over Taiwan. If Beijing blocks Taiwan's participation, that may indicate that China's hostility is unabated.

"Similarly, another test of China's attitude will come next month when APEC meets in Peru. In previous years, the Chinese have

insisted that only a low-ranking official from Taiwan be allowed to attend. This year, Taiwan will seek to have a high-level official there. China will be watched closely to see if its opposition to Taiwan has eased.

"A third test is likely sometime this fall when the US approves a long-awaited arms sale to Taiwan. A series of quiet meetings between senior US officials and those of Taiwan appear to have repaired relations between Washington and Taipei that had been damaged by disagreements over China policy between the Bush administration and the government of former president Chen Shui-bian.

"Beijing will undoubtedly protest the sale, as it always has, but the heat of the protest will indicate whether Beijing has become confident enough to state its objections in a lower key."

B) "Tsai's Timely Visit"

The pro-independence, "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (9/15):

"... First, DPP Chairperson Tsai [Ing-wen] sent a clear message that the DPP is engaging in a critical generation change from the era dominated by former president Chen Shui-bian and other 'heroes' of Taiwan's democratic movement and transition and pledged to introduce a different style of DPP political action as an opposition that will rationally and steadfastly monitor and engage in 'check and balance' with the returned Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuoimintang) administration under President Ma Ying-jeou. ...

"Second, Tsai reminded U.S. foreign policy circles of the hefty and long-term price that Washington, as well as the Taiwan people, will have to pay if the U.S. continues to laud Ma's cross-strait 'reconciliation' through appeasement of the Chinese Communist Party-ruled People's Republic of China and if they persist in overlooking the downside of an unbalanced triangle between the U.S., Taiwan and the PRC. Most Washington observers tend to believe that even if Ma's policy of appeasing the People's Republic of China might cause some problems, there would still be enough time to treat the resulting 'cancer,' unlike the 'heart attacks' of 'surprises' allegedly initiated by Chen during his eight years in office.

"Even worse is the fact that the notion that 'Taiwan is no longer a strategic asset for the U.S.' has been floating around in Washington for quite some time, especially after Bush began to construct what he saw as a 'personal relationship' with PRC State Chairman Hu
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Jintao. Moreover, Ma's decision not to 'irritate' the PRC with 'trouble-making' assertions of Taiwan's sovereignty is seen as fitting in with Bush's desire to secure Beijing's assistance on global security issues such as Iraq, North Korea and Georgia. ...

"Ma's redefinition of Taiwan's relationship with the PRC as 'region to region' instead of the 'state-to-state' definition held by former KMT president Lee Teng-hui and Chen himself poses a grave danger to Taiwan's sovereignty, dignity and democracy by sending a wrong message to the world community that Taiwan does not see itself as an independent country.

"Finally, Tsai began the reconstruction of a trustworthy but healthy relationship with Washington to overcome four years of deadlock and frequent misperceptions of mutual interests in the wake of Bush's dislike of Chen alleged 'trouble-making' referenda despite the explanations by the former DPP administration of the necessity of Taiwan's democratic consolidation and the intensity of PRC pressure.
..."

YOUNG